

**Black Bass Fishing on Niagara River.**

To fishermen generally, and possibly to others who are familiar with the beauties of the Niagara river and the surrounding islands above the "Falls," the following description of a fishing trip on this river may be of interesting reading.

To steal away from the work of the day and forget it, and come in touch with nature, live out practically in the open, eat good, wholesome, well-cooked food, go to bed at dark and get up at daylight, was the way an invitation was sent to us to leave work and take a four-days' fishing trip for black bass. The invitation was so cordial, the heat so great, the grind of business so wearing on the nerves, and the word picture of rest and quiet so alluring, that no one could have well refused, and a wire was sent that we were leaving hot old New York by night train for Buffalo. It is not necessary to describe the trip to Buffalo, except to say that the cars were crowded with people weary of New York, and consequently, the travel being extremely heavy, the train was hours late; but when we arrived, received the firm handshake of welcome, was told to get a "move on," as "Charlie" Holtz (the master fisherman, who knew all the lurking places of the black bass) by now must have been waiting for us an hour, we began to feel that we were hearing the goal of our hopes, "rest and quiet," that our troubles were nearly over, and would soon only be a remembrance.

A short trip of an hour on the trolley road running from Buffalo to Niagara Falls brought us to LaSalle. On getting off the car we were met first by "Rover," who wagged us a welcome, then by little Karl, Mrs. Holtz, and finally by the master fisherman himself. Boat, bait, fishing tackle, everything was ready, and a quick change from store clothes to "fishing old thing," and we took our places in the boat. A turn of the crank, a sputter and splash, and the gasoline, taking the spark, were off for the four days of "rest and quiet" promised us—and some good black bass fishing. It is well here to describe our boat, which was an open boat, clinker built type, about twenty feet long and four feet wide. A small gasoline engine supplied the motive power, but you were immediately impressed with the fact that you were on the Niagara river about two miles above the "Falls," by seeing that the boat also was supplied with a pair of strong oars and a good anchor. The current of the river at LaSalle runs about seven miles an hour.

Our master fisherman steered his craft straight across the river, and anchored by a wreck of a scow. Our hooks baited, we cast them over the side, and like all such matters, the "movie from New York," without any knowledge of fishing for black bass with a slender pole had the first strike or bite, and had the good fortune to land the first black bass. He was highly elated, and felt justly that the stories he had heard about the "suddenness" of hooking and catching black bass was a "myth." He also did not hesitate to express his views clearly on the subject, and only desisted when he could not get the "experienced" fishermen into an argument on the subject. It is mournful to state, however, that although he had his share of "strikes" during the day, he did not land another black bass, and he did not, therefore, alone and unaided, supply the fish supper he sat down to that night, which was cooked by Mrs. Holtz, as only a fisherman's wife can cook fish.

The fishing tackle of the experienced and scientific angler after black bass consists of a light steel rod, possibly a pound in weight, equipped with a shell leader, sinker, good line, large hook, and a "spring" reel. The "spring" reel was the New York man, who had been in the habit of using the reel that you wind up by a crank, and it took him some time to get the "spring" reel. With the "spring" reel, after a fish has been well hooked, you pull the line in by hand and the reel is the slack automatically. This enables the fisherman to keep a tight line on the fish all the time and tire him out. What most impressed the New York man, however, was the bait. The nearest he can de-

scribe them are that they were miniature lobsters. They were about two inches long, and were built exactly like the ordinary large lobster of commerce, but, of course, in miniature. The fisherman called them "crabs," but the man from New York knew better, and when he wanted a new bait he asked for another "lobster." As we started late the first day, after a couple of hours' fishing we returned to the fisherman's house for dinner. After dinner we fished the East river with fair success for the others until dark, and on our return we had our first fish supper of black bass caught by ourselves. From this supper, until we left, we had black bass "galore," morning and night, well cooked, as was also all the other food placed before us.

The Niagara river leaves Buffalo as one river, but just below it is separated by Grand Island into two streams. The American stream is called East river and the Canadian stream the West river. Small excursion boats ply from Buffalo or Tonawanda, going down the West river to and below Navy Island, and returning up the East river, or vice versa. The foot of Navy Island is possibly a mile and a half above the "Falls."

The second day's trip was to be to all the "holes" known to our "master fisherman," so we were all up betimes, and at 6 o'clock were out on the water. A heavy wind bothered us somewhat, but our hunt of black bass, while small, was gratifying, as it was the largest catch of the day. Our master fisherman was indefatigable in his efforts to find the fish. First the suddenness, then the sergeant grass, again the "School House" grounds, the sunken wreck, and other places too numerous to mention, and all having their names—all dear to the master fisherman's heart at one time or another, being where he or one of his party had caught the most fish or the "whooper." All fishermen have a "whooper," they have caught or hooked and lost, most generally lost; but what impressed the "New York man" most on this second day was that, while lying at the "foot of Navy" and "nothing" doing, a boat came alongside and delivered a basket. Mrs. Holtz had not forgotten us, and we all immediately voted for lunch. She knew what appetites the water and open air can get up, and had packed largely, no less than five fried spring chickens for three of us. Well, we only took some bones and wings home for "Rover."

An unpleasant incident was called to the New York man's attention early in the morning of this day by an explosion over towards Grand Island, and a column of water shot into the air. Upon inquiring of the master fisherman, who was using very euphemistic language, we ascertained that "poachers" were in the habit of dynamiting the water, and gathering the fish stunned or killed. This practice is illegal and harmful. It kills all sizes of fish, and tends to drive the bass back into the lake.

On our return at night we found that the dynamiters had been working all day. A telephone message had been sent to the fish warden at Niagara Falls, but a reply was returned that he was laid up with a lame leg. The water was too rough the third day of our stay, but on the fourth day we fished over the old grounds and some new ones. We also took trip up the West river (Canadian) and spent an hour at Black Creek. The West river is more beautiful than the East river, and we felt well repaid. The fishing was excellent, and the New York man, after watching carefully how it was done, managed to keep the fish hooked that same day. The day's result was twenty, and of this catch he had six to his credit.

The black bass is one of the most gamey fish of American waters. It is exciting and exhilarating sport to get a strike, hook your fish well, and then "play" him on a light pole. As soon as he feels the hook he springs out of the water, probably fifty to a hundred feet away, shakes himself and dashes from side to side to get free. The pole bends almost double and the line becomes taut. The science of fishing for black bass, from the New York man's first experience, is "hook your fish well and keep a tight line." If these instructions are followed and you have good tackle, you will find your fish. He did.

From his brief sojourn among the "Black Bass" he has become an enthusiastic supporter of this sport, and hopes that vandals will not be allowed to spoil the sport in Niagara river. S. M. F. Bloomfield, October 17, 1906.

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